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HOW 'GIFT NOTES' CAME ABOUT

by Martin Taylor

It's a place that is never far from my thoughts; The Monroe Institute.

Ever since I was searching for answers in our public library at the age of fourteen, TMI has utterly fascinated me. I was there because of the strange and scary night-time experiences I was having; vibrations, hissing sounds, paralysis. And it was a search that led me to a book that even at a distance down the end of a long aisle; almost seemed to jump off the shelf.

"Journeys Out of The Body" by Robert Monroe, changed the course of my life and is still doing so today.

In the twenty-five years since, I have become a filmmaker and my pursuit for discoveries in consciousness and my exploration of creativity have become one and the same thing. And the last fifteen of those years have been spent taking rigorous notes with one question in mind.

How can I communicate experiences of the mind using film language?

Along with numerous other projects I am developing, including a documentary series about Gateway, and a suite of consciousness/film-driven mobile apps - I proposed a series of testimonial videos to TMI – originally called *'Memo Booth'*.

In between paying the bills, I wanted to use my spare creative time to explore some of the consciousness-related film concepts I had developed.

The idea of TMI recording anonymous audio testimonials seemed like the best way forward, so that people would be more likely to share their thoughts. They could be recorded easily in Virginia at TMI – then sent over to me here in Sydney to illustrate in film.

I got to work on a proposal document to outline the concept for TMI, but it wasn't until I borrowed a friend's camera and produced a sample, that the project took off.

With the much-appreciated help of The Monroe Institute, and in particular Skip Atwater, a system was set up with the right equipment – to gather the recordings.

I work together with friends in my spare time and with the invaluable volunteered work of three talented music composers. The emotion of each short video is very much driven by music.

Sydney-based composers Russell Thornton and Haydn Walker produce orchestral pieces, while Abel Okugawa produces urban sound design from his studio close to TMI, in Virginia.

The Monroe Institute came up with their own and very fitting name for the project – ‘Gift Notes’.

The intention is to explore these inner experiences in film, hear from real people and their experiences, and then send it out across the internet to be enjoyed by everyone with no boundaries of copyright.

For now, I have a bank of audio testimonials to illustrate, and hopefully one day, I'll be able to work on them fulltime. But in the meantime, in-between paying the bills, I chip away at producing more Gift Notes. The next one in line is called ‘RELEASE’- a powerful piece about finding peace with the past.

It's been a while in development, but I would like to do it justice, and I think will be well worth the wait. So, watch this space.

In the meantime, I would like to sincerely thank Skip Atwater for the time, resources and patience with this project, and to everyone that has taken the time to share their experiences for Gift Notes.